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Idaho students outperform the U.S. on national reading, math tests

Idaho fourth and eighth graders continue to score higher than their U.S. counterparts on rigorous national math and reading tests, according to results released today.

Results from the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) also show that the performance of Idaho's fourth graders was very strong compared to the nation and to Idaho students two years ago. Idaho's average fourth grade math score was topped only by four other states and the average reading score was topped only by eight other states.

"We are pleased see that our students compare well to students in other states and to see improvements from two years ago," said Dr. Marilyn Howard, Superintendent of Public Instruction. "I am encouraged by the strong performance of our fourth graders, especially in math. We hope to see that strong start maintained and improve over time."

Howard said the results reported for groups of students – specifically white and Hispanic students – do indicate areas for attention. She noted that:

- The average scores for Idaho's white students in eighth-grade math and reading are lower than their U.S. counterparts.

Dr. Howard said the State Department of Education has focused on improving middle school math instruction through the Idaho Math Academy. The intensive week-long training is able to reach about 130 middle school teachers each year. Dr. Howard has asked for state funding to expand the training to help reach the more than 1,000 middle grade teachers.

In addition, Dr. Howard noted that the state's Direct Math Assessment provides a tool to help measure the complex higher-level math skills required on NAEP.

- While Idaho's Hispanic student performance matches their U.S. Hispanic counterparts, it is still below the overall average. In eighth-grade math, Idaho narrowed the gap between Hispanic and White students in Idaho, but the gap remained the same in the other areas tested.
- With the exception of fourth-grade math, the percentages of students scoring at the highest levels on NAEP remained steady. Dr. Howard said Idaho should aim to have more students score at the higher levels, by increasing advanced or accelerated learning opportunities.

Random samplings of fourth and eighth graders from every state and several U.S. jurisdictions took the rigorous National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in the spring of 2005. States are required to participate in NAEP as part of the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Idaho's fourth graders improved on their reading and math performance from 2003, while eighth-grade performance was stable compared to two years ago.

The National Center for Education Statistics, which manages the NAEP, reports the results in several ways including average scores, percent of students performing at several achievement levels, and cross-state comparisons. NAEP is a rigorous test.

FOURTH-GRADE MATH

According to NCES of the 50 states and two jurisdictions (Washington D.C. and Department of Defense schools) that participated in the fourth-grade math assessment, Idaho's average scores were higher than 29 states and jurisdictions; not statistically different from 18; and lower than 4.

Fourth-Grade Math – National Assessment of Educational Progress			
	Average Score	Percent scoring Basic or better	Percent scoring Proficient or better
Idaho 1992	222	63	16
Idaho 2000	224	68	20
Idaho 2003	235	80	31
Idaho 2005	242	86	40
U.S. 2005	237	79	35

Note: Proficient on ISAT, the state's assessment comparable to Basic on NAEP.

EIGHTH-GRADE MATH

According to NCES of the 52 states and jurisdictions that participated in the fourth-grade math assessment, Idaho's scores were higher than 20 states and jurisdictions; not statistically different from 17; and lower than 14.

Eighth-Grade Math – National Assessment of Educational Progress			
	Average Score	Percent scoring Basic or better	Percent scoring Proficient or better
Idaho 1990	271	63	18
Idaho 1992	275	68	22
Idaho 2000	277	70	27
Idaho 2003	280	73	28
Idaho 2005	281	73	30
U.S. 2005	278	68	28

Note: Proficient on ISAT, the state's assessment comparable to Basic on NAEP.

FOURTH-GRADE READING

According to NCES of the 52 states and jurisdictions that participated in the fourth-grade reading assessment, Idaho was higher than 22 states and jurisdictions; not statistically different from 20; and lower than 9.

Fourth-Grade Reading – National Assessment of Educational Progress			
	Average Score	Percent scoring Basic or better	Percent scoring Proficient or better
Idaho 2002	220	67	32
Idaho 2003	218	64	30
Idaho 2005	222	69	33
U.S. 2005	217	62	30

Note: Proficient on ISAT, the state's assessment comparable to Basic on NAEP.

EIGHTH-GRADE READING

According to NCES of the 52 states and jurisdictions that participated in the 8th-grade reading assessment: Idaho was higher than 22 states and jurisdictions; not statically different from 20; and lower than 9.

Eighth-Grade Reading – National Assessment of Educational Progress			
	Average Score	Percent scoring Basic or better	Percent scoring Proficient or better
Idaho 2002	266	79	34
Idaho 2003	264	76	32
Idaho 2005	264	76	32
U.S. 2005	260	71	29

Note: Proficient on ISAT, the state's assessment comparable to Basic on NAEP.

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(Editors and reporters: More score information for Idaho and other states is available at

<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/profile.asp?state=ID> and www.sde.state.id.us/naep/.)